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See story on page 14



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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"We now have a dedicated robotics room. That's a major improvement. The business classes now have state-of-the-art computers." - *Darlene Listro*

See story page 6

ON THE COVER

Mike Stacy of Rocky Hill is preparing to present the 14th Annual Christmas Wish CT event to benefit to children and families in need.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
See story page 14

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“Ultimately the school is for the kids, and they’re the ones who will be here, so it’s important for them to get this chance.”

**Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Mark Zito**



Representatives from the junior and senior classes cut the ceremonial ribbon for the recently completed school construction project.

Photos by Allie Rivera

Making the cut

Students celebrate finished renovation project

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Rocky Hill High School Band Director James Shuman counted off. A moment later, the sound of the Royal Blues marching band began echoing across the parking lot as students decked out in bright colors began to walk out to the front of the school.

“This isn’t a typical day,” Principal Mario Almeida said with a smile.

That warm Friday morning of Oct. 27 found the entire school community gathered in front of the building to host their own ribbon-cutting signifying the completion of a three-year renovation project. The event was held one week after a similar ribbon-cutting ceremony was held for town officials.

“Last week was more for government members, town officials,” Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mark Zito said. “This one is just for the students.”

Held on the same day as the school’s pep rally, students gathered in front of the stairs to the main entrance outfitted in colors signifying their class as student government representatives addressed the crowd.

“Personally, I’m very happy to have floors and

ceilings throughout the whole school,” sophomore class President Mia Aglieco said.

“Even though we weren’t there for most of the project, we are ready to begin our high school careers in a new and improved school,” freshman class President Michaela Creevy said.

For the upperclassmen, whose entire time at Rocky Hill High School has been affected by the renovation, being able to see the project through to completion was a milestone.

“Knowing the condition of the old school made walking into our senior year even more exciting,” senior class President Madelyn Morse said.

It was for those students in particular that Almeida felt it was necessary to host this special ribbon-cutting.

“It’s important for these students to be a part of this because it’s really about them,” he said.

“These are the ones who will be spending their high school years here,” Zito said. “Ultimately the



Rocky Hill High School Principal Mario Almeida addresses the students, faculty and staff.

school is for the kids, and they’re the ones who will be here, so it’s important for them to

get this chance.”

Along with hearing from Almeida and their class presidents, students also listened to a brief speech from Rocky Hill’s teacher of the year, physical education and health teacher David Dubos. He encouraged them to use this new beginning to get involved in the school community.

“Four years goes by really quick,” he said.



From left, drummers Adam Buerk, Christi Montalbano and Connor Gagne waited for their cue.



Rocky Hill High School Marching Band members Dan Cho, left, and Jason Freitas played "Fight On Rocky Hill" to help usher their fellow students into the ceremony.

"Take advantage of everything that you can. We're going to support you."

To allow more students to be involved in the event, Almeida arranged for one person to be drawn at random from each grade who would get

to help cut the ribbon with a gigantic pair of scissors.

"This is for all of you," he told the crowd.

Once the ribbons were cut, students were led by the band into the gymnasium to commence

their pep rally. Almeida said that having the opportunity to allow them to celebrate the school in their own ceremony was significant.

"It's just something that was really important to do," he said. **RHL**

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Teacher Cindy Latina stands next to a pop-up computer in her business education classroom.

Photos by Mark Jahne

Wrapping it up

High school renovation project comes to an end

by Mark Jahne
 Editor

The three-year construction project to renovate and upgrade Rocky Hill High School is finished. There were challenges along the way but administrators said it came in on time and on budget.

The \$50 million project, approved in a referendum, was intended to bring educational facilities at RHHS up to 21st century standards. It also was designed to improve safety and make the school easier to access for students and others with disabilities.

"The media center was outdated and the media center needed to be revised" to meet NEASC standards, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mark Zito said.

NEASC is the New England

Association of Schools and Colleges, a major accrediting agency.

"The existing building was a 1980 structure. It was time for a facelift," Zito added.

Music and physical education areas were expanded. The entire building underwent a complete technical upgrade and modernization. Much of the work was done while school was in session so classes and activities had to be moved out of sections that were under construction for periods of time.

"ADA was another big one," said RHHS Principal Mario Almeida.

Student drop-off was moved to level ground at the rear of the building and a lift was installed out front. Auditorium and gym access

is now from the rear as well.

"We really needed to upgrade our signage," Almeida added. "One of the large benefits of that job is we expanded the cafeteria."

Students still eat lunch in multiple waves but those waves have been reduced to four and the time allocated for lunch was increased to 42 minutes.

The technical education area is another part of the school that is larger than it was in the past. This includes engineering and robotics classrooms.

"We have a home and auto maintenance class that came out of the renovation," Almeida said.

"We now have a dedicated robotics room. That's a major improvement. The business classes now have state-of-the-art computers."

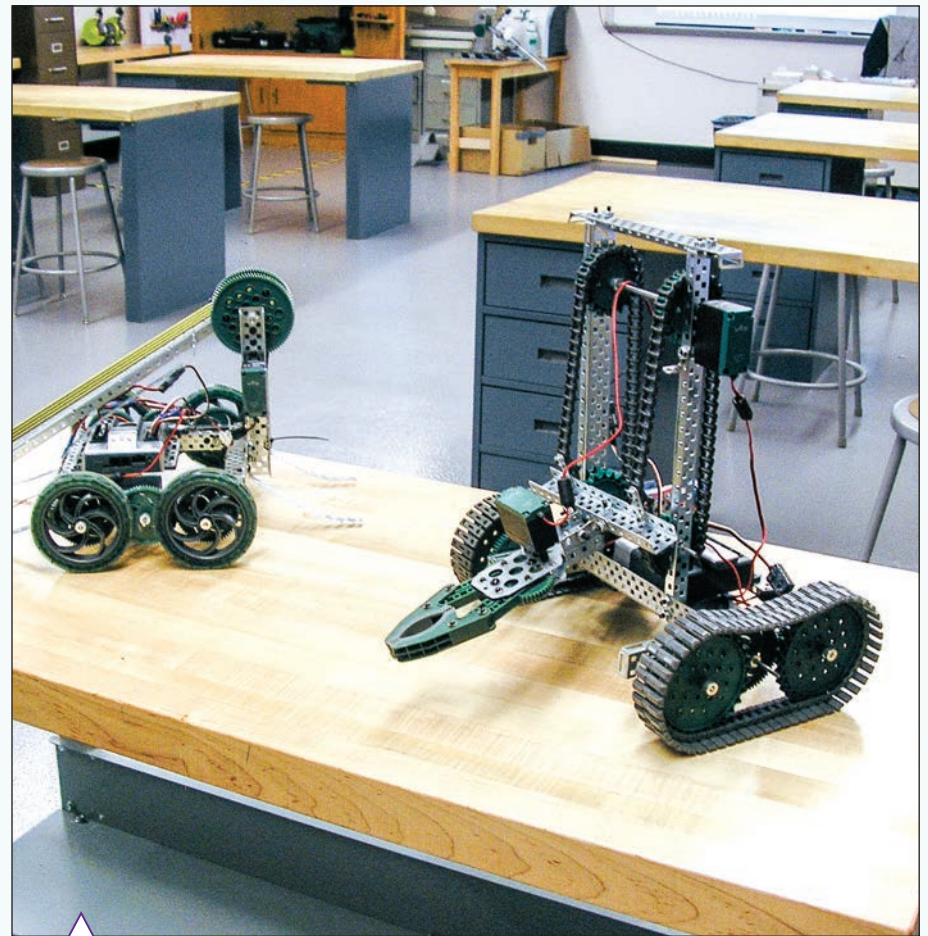
– Darlene Listro

"We now have a dedicated robotics room. That's a major improvement. The business classes now have state-of-the-art computers," Darlene Listro, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, added.

The project enabled to school to establish two classrooms for engineering instruction. Almeida said all of the science classrooms now have labs in them, which was not the case prior to the project.

Listro said all of the changes provide teachers with more flexibility in presenting their lessons. One example she cited was mirrored demonstration places.

"That has been so well



The first floor robotics area was renovated, expanded and given its own dedicated space.

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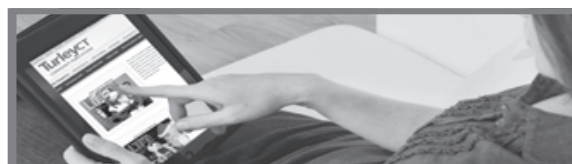
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△ The renovated cafeteria features food stations.



△ Another area that received a facelift is the wood shop.

received,” she said.

Almeida said the entire property is covered with security cameras and video surveillance, inside and out.

Staff at the main entrance have a panoramic view of the entry way, front steps and parking lot. No one

gets into the building without identifying themselves and the reason for their visit.

Charles Zettergren, assistant superintendent of finance and operations, said there were the usual unexpected bumps along the way,

which was expected for a project of this size. The district was prepared for such challenges and was able to handle them without adding cost or construction time.

There have been community tours and a pair of ribbon cuttings to

celebrate the project’s completion. Administrators said students, faculty and staff are all pleased with the results.

There are 744 students enrolled in the high school for the 2017-2018 academic year. **RHL**

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Preparations begin

Town gears up to celebrate its 175th anniversary in 2018

by Mark Jahne
Editor

The calendar year is drawing to a close and next year promises to be an exciting one for Rocky Hill. The town will celebrate its 175th anniversary as an official municipality.

Planners are already starting to figure out how to mark the occasion and volunteers are being recruited for the various activities that may take place. The goal is to fund these activities in ways that will not involve the use of tax dollars.

Mayor Claudia Baio and Lisa Zerio, the director of parks and recreation, are co-chairing the anniversary committee. A selection of sub-committees has already been established to handle specific aspects of the year-long celebration.

"We're starting to get volunteers but we need many more," Zerio said. "It's a great collaborative effort with

the Board of Education, town officials, the historical society and the community."

Other members of the main committee include Library Director Mary Hogan, Town Historian Robert Herron, Logan Gauvin of parks and recreation, Brian Wosczyzna of the Rocky Hill Chamber of Commerce, John Serra of the Rocky Hill Historical Society and Deputy Mayor Joseph Kochanek Jr., a former fire chief who is also active with the historical society.

"Starting in January, it's going to be a year of events," Zerio said.

Committees are looking into creating a time capsule, establishing a farmers market and creation of a huge wooden cake as three of the many options.

Rocky Hill High School students will be invited to compete in a contest to create an official logo for the anniversary. Third-graders at Stevens



and West Hill schools will be encouraged to write essays as well.

Zerio said various merchandise will be sold to help defray the costs. The committee hopes to hang a large banner across the Silas Deane Highway proclaiming the anniversary year and is working on that with the state Department of Transportation.

In addition to the merchandise, she also hopes to raise money through fund-raising events and activities, marketing efforts and business sponsorships.

Rather than plan unique and more expensive events, the idea is to incorporate a 175th anniversary component into things that already occur such as the Memorial Day Parade, summer concert series and Fallfest.

An official 175th birthday party is scheduled for July 21 at Elm Ridge

Park. Forty residents attended the first volunteer recruitment evening in September. Zerio was pleased with the turnout so early in the process. So was Baio.

"We started meeting earlier in the year ... it's pretty exciting," the mayor said. "We're going to do a birthday party in the middle of July and that will be the big day."

The first two activities will be the logo design competition and the essay contest with the theme of what makes Rocky Hill special.

"Those are the most immediate things," Baio said.

She agreed with Zerio that the plan is to raise sponsorship money and other private funding for the year of celebration.

"We don't want to use taxpayer money," Baio said. **RHL**

Anyone who is interested in volunteering should contact Zerio at 860-258-2772 or parksandrec@rockyhillct.gov.


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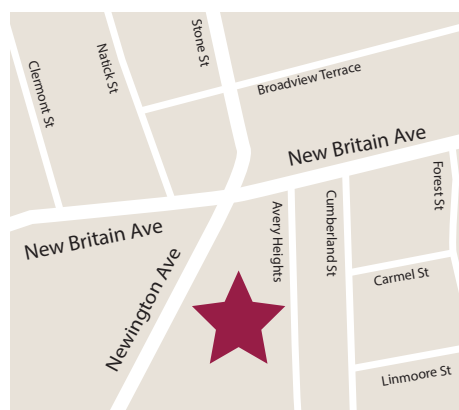
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COMMUNITY PUBLICATIONS

Finding their own journey to wellness

Bonnie Barrow opens Balancing Bodies

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

When Bonnie Barrow graduated from high school, she was sure of two things.

"I said, I don't want to do anything with math or computers. So what did I end up doing? Sitting at a computer working with math," she recalled.

For years Barrow, who lives in Wethersfield, worked in banking, starting as a teller at the original CBT almost 40 years ago and working her way up through various departments, including mortgage processing. She had a long career in finance, working at Bridge Bank and Shawmut Bank, before ended up at a mortgage company.

Despite her initial reluctance to enter the field, there were certain aspects she liked.

"It works or it doesn't work. There's no gray area. It balances or it doesn't. It has to go a certain way or it doesn't qualify. What I didn't like was the corporate structure," she said.

While she was in banking, her husband gave her a gift certificate for therapeutic massages at the Connecticut Center for Massage Therapy.

"I would go during my lunch hour," she said. "As I started to receive them as regularly as I could, I started to imagine this would be a really cool thing to do. But you talk yourself out of it. How would I find time for it?"

Then she had a massage that propelled her into action.

"[The massage therapist] found areas of tension I didn't know I had. I decided I needed to do this. That was the end of April, right near my birthday. By the beginning of May, I was in classes," Barrow, who is a 1995 graduate of the school, said.

"I was in a place at the mortgage company where I was trying to advance, to get new skills. When

I went there [CCMT], it was like, 'Wow, this is great. This I could do.' I would report to only me, which I really like, and I'm helping folks to find their own journey to wellness. When I graduated massage was really just coming of age."

Barrow has been on the faculty at CCMT since 1999. She has continued to expand her own skills with a focus on energy balancing techniques such as quantum touch, cranio sacral therapy, reflexology, peaceful touch and access bars.

She opened Balancing Bodies on the Silas Deane Highway in Rocky Hill in February. In a way, it was a homecoming for her. When the space was Beaux Visages, Barrow would go for facials as well as sometimes working there, which she did in addition to having her own massage business.

"I worked here on and off and watched how she did things. I saw that this space was an ideal space for growth," she said. "It takes a certain type of character to run a business."

More recently the space was home to The Center. When owner/founder Larry Joyner died in November 2016, Barrow learned the location was available.

"Come January I came in and talked to the landlord. I took over the space and purchased much of the equipment," she said. "I was working out of my home and still teach at the school, too. I'd kind of been searching for something."

About a year ago she completed a real estate course and also has an organizing business. Right now, both are on the back burner.

"Everything's taken a back



seat. I'm trying to develop a co-working environment with massage therapists, acupuncturists, sound healing, crystal healing, all natural modalities so you can come to one place. I'm really hoping to pull it all together in one space, to build a reputation as a wellness center," she said.

"I want the therapists to have a place to show up and work, to have all they need. I want the opportunity to offer classes to the public and educate them."

Almost every Wednesday there's some sort of free class, such as learning about essential oils or meditation. She also places an emphasis on keeping things eco-friendly, not even handing out appointment cards.

"I even want to keep it paperless. I don't have a menu of services. I keep everything on the website or booking site," Barrow said.

A variety of modalities are offered including deep tissue massage, sports massage, prenatal massage and cupping. She also offers BioMat Therapy and an infrared sauna.

The massage tables are electric so they can be easily adjusted during a session and have heated table covers and fleece linings to make them more comfortable. There's also a grounding mat on each of them.

"We're not as grounded to the earth as much as we were centuries ago. The earth has healing properties and this mat is designed to ground us to the earth," Barrow explained.

She would like to bring in an aesthetician and possibly add a product line if she finds one that fits her philosophy.

"I'm looking for things that are affordable and more natural. That's kind of the direction we're moving in," she said.

Barrow will often incorporate different modalities within a session.

"What I like to do is some energy work within every massage session," she said. "It's another way to connect on a higher vibration to find healing within our bodies and connect with other human beings."

Sharon Dennison of West Hartford first met Barrow when a friend gave her a gift certificate for a massage in 2003.

"I've been a client since then and consider Bonnie not only a great massage therapist, but also a caring friend. Bonnie has helped me through some extensive surgeries as well as just the ups and downs of being active with running, swimming and strength training," Dennison said.

"She is always willing to explore modifications, as needed, to continue our sessions, and always honors my needs as a whole person. Bonnie listens to, emphasizes with and supports her clients."

That's what Barrow wants her clients to feel.

"That they're cared for, that my therapists care, that the clients are happy," she said. "We want to know what they want in a session, why are



Bonnie Barrow worked in banking for many years before attending massage school. She has opened Balancing Bodies on the Silas Deane Highway in Rocky Hill.

Photo by Mara Dresner

they here, what they require."

She added that it connects to what she teaches at CCMT.

"What do you give your clients when they walk out they door so they want to come back? You care about them." **RHL**

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“We endeavor very hard to grant wishes to as many families as possible. We make magic happen.”

– Mike Stacy

It's all about the children

Pair of men dedicate themselves to fulfilling Christmas wishes

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Bruce Scotti of Newington is a self-employed accountant. Mike Stacy of Rocky Hill is a radio personality at WRCH-FM. But they share one thing in common.

Both have a passion for helping children and families who are down on their luck to experience the joy of Christmas. The two men are the driving force behind a nonprofit organization called Christmas Wish CT.

“We started 14 years ago; 2004 was our first season. At that point, it was leftover radio prizes,” Stacy said.

They met when Scotti was involved in a bidding competition through the radio station to acquire Michael Bublé concert tickets with a meet and greet opportunity for his wife. He didn’t get the tickets, but he did make a new friend in Stacy.

“I went down to the radio station and we sat and talked,” Scotti said.

“Let’s go shop for kids and make a nice Christmas for people,” Stacy recalled. “We went from a radio station giving out a handful of prizes to this.”

That’s how Christmas Wish CT was born. They solicit letters from children, determine the needs, and try their best to provide the requested toy or other gift. In the early years they asked families to come pick up the gifts at the radio station

in Farmington.

“I started recruiting all of my neighbors and clients for both volunteering and donating money,” Scotti said.

Growth of the program in recent years, including the addition of numerous volunteers and corporate supporters, has enabled the organization to hold a party to which all of the recipients and their families are invited.

The men estimate that as many as 125 people now volunteer for their organization. Christmas Wish CT was a nominee for the National Association of Broadcasters Crystal Award for outstanding community service.

The party was held at Lake Compounce the past three years. Cold weather, particularly at the 2016 party, convinced Scotti and Stacy to find an indoor facility and this year’s gathering will be at Nomads Adventure Quest in South Windsor.

Activities will include a buffet dinner, climbing wall, laser tag, bowling, basketball, video arcade, billiards, miniature golf and more.

The identities of the recipients are carefully protected. Stacy also cultivated a major donor that has asked to remain anonymous.

In recent years they have visited PriceRite supermarket in New Britain and asked if they could surprise people by paying for their groceries at the checkout lines. They plan to do that again

this year at another store in the chain whose location will be kept confidential to avoid a massive crowd.

“Our donor went up to \$3,000 and PriceRite will also give \$3,000,” Stacy said.

“Elves” will help transport the groceries to the pleasantly surprised people’s cars.

“We’re 100 percent volunteers. That way 97 cents on every dollar goes to the children,” Scotti said.

Most of the items they give away are donated by individuals, families, schools, businesses and other community sources. Children are transported to the parties in stylish limos or buses, not school buses.

“We have three shelters and one after-school program” that they support, Scotti said.

The shelters for women and children who are the victims of domestic violence are Prudence Crandall, My Sister’s Place and South Park Inn. The after-school program is held at the Charter Oak Cultural Center in Hartford.

“We get referrals from social service agencies throughout the state,” Stacy said.

The organization is also listed on the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center website and several of its volunteers come from that hospital. Christmas Wish CT has a website and Facebook page on which children can write a let-



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ter to Santa requesting a gift. Recipients range in age from birth to 18.

"Every letter is read by our people," Scotti said. "We bring 50 volunteers together and each of these children is individually shopped for."

"We endeavor very hard to grant wishes to as many families as possible," Stacy added. "We make magic happen."

"Almost everything we do is free. We shop based on need," Scotti said. "To see the look on a kid's face when they get a bicycle ..."

Big Y has been helpful in providing them with gift cards for holiday meals. A recent Halloween ball at the Shriner's hall on the Berlin Turnpike in Newington helped raise funds for this year's event. More than 200 people attended.

Stacy said Christmas Wish CT is not an official endeavor of WRCH but many of his fellow employees also volunteer their time for the organization. The station provides plenty of promotional support.

Much of what they receive and give away is donated, including food. They keep all of the gifts in a storage facility and the use of that space is donated as well.

"We also have a relationship with Barter Business Unlimited," Stacy said. "We got our first foundation donation this year."

The men said that some families that were once down on their luck and benefited from their



Mike Stacy, left, and Bruce Scotti are full of the holiday spirit.

organization are now in better financial shape. They have become donors as an expression of gratitude for what they once received.

"We have a woman who knitted us 75 hats," Scotti said.

The nonprofit spends, on average, about \$150 on each child, not counting food and donated items. Oreo donated 100,000 candy bars, a new product line, that the organization is free to sell to

help raise additional funds.

Stacy and Scotti said they hope to become a statewide operation but do not want to venture beyond Connecticut's borders. Most of their clients currently come from the central part of the state. **RHL**

To learn more see christmaswishct.org. Buttons to make a donation are situated on both the website and Facebook page.

Photos by Lisa Brisson

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Students of the month

Pair sets an example of smooth transition to middle school

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Starting a new school year can be daunting for anyone, but for sixth grade students entering their first year of middle school, the change can seem overwhelming.

"I was worried before I started," 11-year-old Hannah Walsh said.

"I was, too, but so far the school year has been really great," added her classmate Shea Wilkinson, also 11.

Both Hannah and Shea were selected by Principal Rick Watson to show that the transition from elementary to Griswold Middle School is not as scary as it may initially seem.

"They're two great examples of how well that transition can go," Watson said.

Hannah and Shea found the biggest changes in transitioning from elementary school to middle school was the structure of their day.

"It's different because we change classes now instead of staying with one teacher," Shea said. "It's fun having different teachers, though. Every teacher does something fun and interesting every day."

The change has led them to start to feel as though they are more responsible for their education.

"It's a different experience getting to feel more grown up and more mature," Hannah said.

Both previously attended Stevens School. They said that in the few short months they have been at Griswold, they've already noticed changes in themselves.

"I feel like I've gotten to be more mature and have to be responsible for myself," Shea said.

One of those areas of responsibility happens in the time between classes. At the elementary level, students walk with their teacher to lunch and any

special classes they may have, such as art or music. But at the middle school, they are responsible for getting themselves to the next class or activity.

"You also get to sit wherever you want at lunch," Shea said. "At the elementary school, we had to sit with our class."

Students also experience greater responsibility in managing their homework.

"We definitely have more homework now," Hannah said. "Now that we switch classes and each teacher specializes in one thing, each teacher has their own homework, so they don't already know what else we have."

They also said they had to learn to adjust to managing their time better. While the elementary schools began each day by 9 a.m., the middle school has an earlier start time.

"It's hard getting up earlier in the morning," Hannah said. "It's a big adjustment, but it's nice because now we get out of school earlier in the afternoon."

In addition to having to wake up earlier each day, the pair also said that adjusting to a school day that no longer has recess was a challenge.

"The first day I remember thinking, this is so weird," Shea said with a laugh. "I just had this feeling like I was supposed to go outside."

Though many of the changes

that sixth-graders experience revolve around school work and scheduling, transitioning to the middle school also allowed them to meet a large group of new people.

"I like that now I get to see the friends I had from West Hill more," Hannah said.

While they already knew some of their classmates from across town, Shea said others were total strangers.

"If you pay attention in class and do your work, there's nothing to worry about because you'll be prepared."

– Hannah Walsh



Eleven-year-olds Hannah Walsh, left, and Shea Wilkinson discussed how the transition from elementary school to middle school was not as difficult as they perceived.

Photos by Allie Rivera

"At first you could see people separating themselves into West Hill and Stevens groups," he said. "Little by little, people are making friends with each other and coming together."

Now that they are well into their first year at the middle school, they both look back on their first days with fondness.

"On that first day of school, I was really worried about will I know anybody? Will I get lost?" Hannah recalled. "Now I know that I didn't need to be worried."

Both Hannah and Shea hope fifth-graders at West Hill and Stevens know that the transition to middle school isn't as daunting as it may initially seem.

"They talk a lot about how things will be at the middle school," Hannah said. "I think they want us to be prepared, and we are."

She offered a piece of advice for those who are already nervous about the transition.

"You don't have to worry if you do your work and follow the rules," she said. "If you pay attention in class and do your work, there's nothing to worry about because you'll be prepared." **RHL**



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Chauncey

Chauncey is a 3-year-old male American chinchilla rabbit with smooth and silky fur. He enjoys being cuddled and can live in any type of home. Children need to be gentle with him and other animals are OK as long as they are gentle, too. He would particularly enjoy the company of another rabbit.

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LIFE

in the classroom

New science unit brings class pet to kindergarten

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Students in April Wiley's kindergarten class were perplexed.

As they sat on the colorful rug in their West Hill School classroom, the students looked up at the Smart Board in front of them that asked "what do living things need?"

The lesson was part of a larger science unit that is new to the district and revolves around both what qualifies something to be considered living and how those living things are cared for.

"We always touch on living things in kindergarten and our district decided to use this curricula," kindergarten teacher Elizabeth Weber said. "With kindergartners, you try to focus on the world around them."

As students sat in Wiley's classroom, they were reminded of their recent nature walk where they went

outside to look at the plants, trees and animals surrounding the school.

"We were looking for things that were alive and not alive," Wiley said.

For many of the kindergartners, that differentiation was a difficult one to make.

"When you introduce the question of what's living and what's not, a lot of them have no clue how to tell," Wiley said. "I started with a stapler and some thought it was living because it moves. With this unit, their schema [way of cognitively understanding] is getting bigger."

According to the teachers at West Hill, students entering kindergarten come from such a wide background that learning to use critical thinking to differentiate between living and non-living things can be a challenge.

"Kindergartners come from all over the place," Weber said. "There are a lot of things they've never seen or ever been exposed to and this is a way to equalize that."

The new science unit allows students to start from a common place and build together, enabling those who have come from a variety of backgrounds to still feel connected to the work.

"We feel that everyone will feel included," kindergarten teacher Laurie Antolini said. "It doesn't separate learners into different levels."

In addition to allowing kindergartners to explore a new area of science, the unit has numerous interdisciplinary facets as well.

"This unit has a lot of ties to the reading and writing we're doing," Weber said. "They have books where they're noticing and labeling what they see."

The teachers pointed out that even seemingly basic skills such as identifying what they see can be a new skill for kindergartners who are just beginning to discover new parts of the world.

"They look at the world differently," Weber said. "They'll start to

make connections now that they're out in the world."

Once students learn to identify what makes something living, the science unit had them discuss the care and keeping of plants.

Wiley's students looked at two different potted plants she brought into the classroom, one of which had been watered and properly exposed to sunlight, the other of which had been forgotten. The teacher had students approach the plants, touch the leaves and discuss as a group the difference between the two.

"We're guiding them through their learning. We're giving them questions," Weber said. "We're not just giving them information, we want them to explore first."

After discovering how plants require care, the unit moves on to animals. While the teachers have covered the topic of caring for living creatures in their classes before, this year they decided to take their hands-on approach to the next level.

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In early November, each kindergarten classroom at West Hill unveiled a beta fish as its class pet.

"I was excited," teacher Charlotte Baribault said. "I think it adds another level to their learning."

Before the unveiling, students had the chance to discuss what kinds of animals would work well as a class pet, knowing what they had learned about their care.

"They're just so excited," teacher Alison Dillon said. "There's a lot of discovery that comes with this."

In addition to learning about caring for living creatures, the unit culminating in a class pet also allows students to learn about responsibility.

The duties for feeding the fish will be rotated throughout the class, allowing everyone the chance to care for the fish throughout the remainder of the academic year.

"They feel like they have ownership over the classroom," Baribault said. "It's something they can see and experience together. It's like a community, all of us are doing it, so it's creating a community of scientists."

The teachers are grateful to the administration at West Hill for both allowing and encouraging them to take this next step in student learning.

"Every school is different. Amending the curriculum to suit our students is something we always do and we're continuing to do with our students," Weber said. [RHL](#)



"They feel like they have ownership over the classroom. It's something they can see and experience together."

– Charlotte Baribault

Students in April Wiley's kindergarten class at West Hill School looked at different potted plants, one of which had been properly cared for and the other of which had been forgotten, to discuss how to differentiate between the two.

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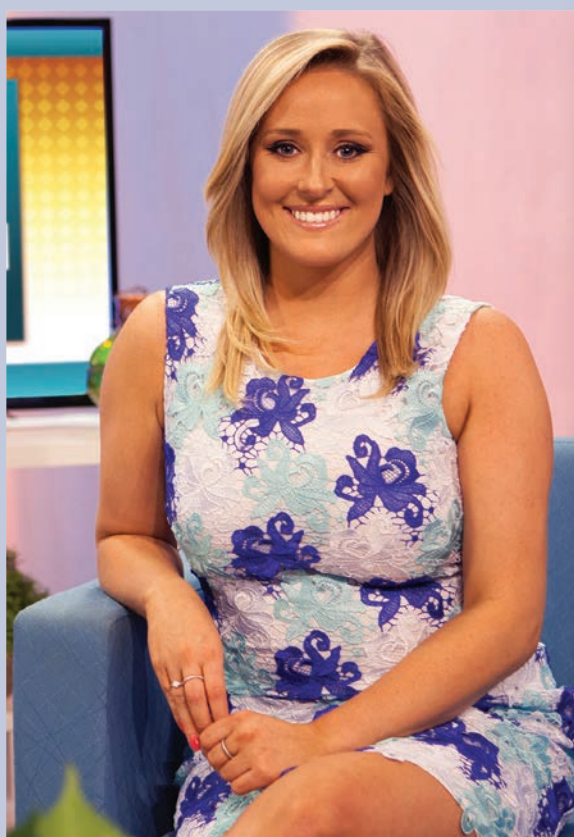


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Holiday LIFE



Opening the mind to *gratefulness*

Yoga practitioners
share their tips
for finding calm

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Sure, it's the most wonderful time of the year, but between the mile-long to-do list and the crowds and the cold and all the demands on your time, it can sometimes be a challenge to be grateful, even as we have a holiday that reminds us to give thanks.

If you've ever taken a yoga class and spent a few blissful moments in savasana, you probably know that yoga can calm the mind. But even yoga instructors have to deal with long lines and traffic jams.

"Yoga teaches stillness, presence; it quiets the mind. However, it is a practice, and we are all human.

Sometimes my house is a mess, the kids are running around, the dog is barking; at the same time I'm trying to make dinner and the doorbell rings. Life can be a test of patience. At that moment I have a choice. Do I scream, or can I take a deep breath and find gratitude for this crazy life of mine? So, I bring my hand to my belly and feel the breath come into my body and then exhale and focus on letting go. Again, it's a practice, and staying focused for just a few seconds can be work in the beginning, but with practice I can take control of the thoughts and come back to stillness, feeling gratitude for

all of my many blessings," said Shelley Jansen, studio director of Bikram Yoga Glastonbury.

Jansen started her own yoga practice in 1998 while living in Australia. After moving back to the U.S. in 2000, she was introduced to Bikram Yoga and attended training in Los Angeles in 2002, opening her own studio in 2003.

While Jansen said that a Yoga Asana class can be a good place to start, you can also begin in the here and now.

Just go outside.

"Simply taking a walk in the woods and being very conscious of

the trees and the leaves can be a perfect place to start," she added.

Richard Mercer of Bikram Yoga Simsbury in Weatogue knows a little something about stress. A former full-scholarship Division 1A college football player, he previously worked as a vice president at Travelers, running an IT division.

"I've been practicing Bikram Yoga since 2004 when I was in my late 40s. I heard about it through a friend and, although I had never done yoga before, after my first class I knew it would be a lifelong practice," he said.

At the time, although he could

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Holiday LIFE

lift a lot of weight, he couldn't get his arms over his head or touch his toes.

"What I found surprising, however, was the effect yoga had on relaxing my mind. I didn't realize how much I needed the brain break as well as the stretching. I convinced my [now wife] Laurie to try it with me, and she found it helped with her neck and back pain and also with handling the stress of her job. Being able to share the experience was great," he noted.

After practicing Bikram for a few years, he decided to go for teacher training, attending a nine-week, full-time teacher training in Hawaii with more than 300 people from more than 40 countries.

"I called Laurie and told her that this was a business; we needed to open a studio. I quit my corporate job, and we opened Bikram Yoga Simsbury in 2009. Laurie went to teacher training in 2010, so we both teach," he said.

Mercer noted the benefits are far-reaching.

"You [learn to] understand the saying, 'If you are not grateful for what you have, you'll never be grateful for what you think you want.' I thought that all there was was the business, corporate world. Opening this yoga business makes me personally grateful because I believe it saved my life and has helped so many others improve their own lives," he said.

He recommends not doing too

much too soon.

"Just come in and start. Don't expect too much right away, just take your time and let it happen. A regular yoga practice allows your mind to be calm and to focus, and this creates the space for gratefulness. We always encourage our folks to appreciate the small improvements, millimeters of improvement in flexibility and strength. The peacefulness, the calmness that yoga brings, this opens the mind to gratefulness."

Julie Starr, owner of Starr Yoga in West Hartford, also noted that the postures aren't the goal.

"The practice of yoga is just one of the eight 'paths of yoga.' The physical practice helps you feel certain things that you can then apply to situations off your mat. One of these is gratitude. When you focus on your breath in class, you feel grateful for your lungs and the air that we breathe. Every morning I am thankful to be alive and have healthy organs so I can breathe comfortably. The physical poses are challenging and remind me to be thankful for my body and its ability to do the poses. When I walk my daughter to school, I am thankful that I have the ability to do so. To be able to take a yoga class and to have an hour to do something for myself, to have the means to do so, I am thankful," Starr said.

Starr said there are many paths into yoga and meditation, and you can start small. She recommends

online videos for those nervous to take a class right away, such as YogaGlo, or meditation apps such as Insight Timer and Buddhify.

"The simplest way I find to bring more gratitude in one's life is to remind yourself how lucky and thankful you are. Repeat a simple mantra when you wake up or every time you look in the mirror. It can be as simple as 'Life is good.' In life, we get back what we give out. Practice gratitude and you will receive gratitude from the world around you."

Gina Uricchio, a Rocky Hill resident who teaches at Live Right Wellness in Old Wethersfield, has been practicing for more than 15 years.

"It's a daily essential piece of my day that incorporates movement and meditation," she said. "My practice keeps me grounded and able to trust my journey in this world and that all is unfolding as it should. Practicing gratitude every day naturally changes your vibration and moods instantly. Just saying thank you is enough."

It's not that she doesn't have her challenges. She even found a way to do yoga in bed while recovering following a mastectomy.

"If I can say thank you, even if it's for the cup of coffee I'm drinking, it immediately changes my vibration. With my yoga practice I can easily bring my nervous system to a state of balance, which in turn helps me manage my emotions," she said.

Lisa Romano, who opened Glastonbury Barre and Yoga in April 2016, has only been practicing yoga for a few years.


"It was a transformative experience that went beyond the physical," she said.

Yoga helps her count her blessings, which can set the tone for the day.

She said that this is especially important when life is less than ideal.

"For people who are going through difficult times, being able to take an hour for themselves to notice their breath and their body, this might be the only time of the day to practice self-care. People often have a difficult time taking time for themselves, and dedicating an hour on the schedule to yoga solves that. Oftentimes, the practice of yoga is combined with journaling, visualization and meditation," Romano said. "For me, personally, yoga has taught me that in any stressful situation, my breath is vital to staying in control. ... We are all going to experience traveling hassles, traffic, or bad news. Deep breathing and stretching instantly calm you down. And for that life lesson, I am grateful." **RHL**

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Holiday LIFE

Finding the light in tough times

How to be grateful
when all is not great

by Lynn Woike
LIFE Staff

It's easy to be grateful when you're in love, when you just got a big bonus, when you're healthy, when there's food on the table and when there's a new car parked in your driveway.

Gratitude is not so easy when you are alone and in pain, when the cupboards are bare, when the vehicle that gets you to work needs repairs totaling two months rent and when the world seems to be crumbling.

Patricia Barone, co-founder of the West Hartford Counseling Center, has been working with adults who are struggling with life transitions, anxiety, depression, health-related issues, grief, loss and relational difficulties since 1984.

"In the short run, it may seem that what we want is what we need in order to feel more happiness and inner peace, but actually it may be just the opposite," she said. "Research supports the premise that gratitude for what we already have helps us to feel greater inner peace and happiness. The science of gratitude suggests that happiness is not a destination or a

possession; you cannot wear it or consume it. Expressing thanks and giving gratitude in the present moment for what is is what leads to greater contentment and inner peace.

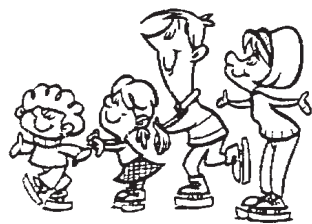
"An article in the New York Times suggested that, whether or not we feel grateful, we can intentionally choose to practice gratitude and by doing that, we will raise our happiness level."

Barone suggests finding three things a day for which you feel or you can imagine feeling gratitude.

"For example, it might be a clerk's smile or a snowstorm that keeps you home from work, or the way your dog greets you. It can be as subtle as the feel of a cool breeze on a hot day, or how cozy fleece feels on your skin on a cold day," she said.

With time, "the transformative power of gratitude" will bring a sense of peace, softening the harshness of life's struggles.

Founder of Copper Beech Institute and Associate Director at Holy Family Passionist Retreat Center Brandon Nappi



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Holiday LIFE

said, “I believe that as long as we are alive, there is more right with us than is wrong with us.”

By focusing on how hopelessly broken life seems, fear is stoked and “there is a temptation to catastrophize our lives ... leaving us feeling overwhelmed and paralyzed.”

Bringing an alternate energy source to our challenges is helpful, he said, explaining, “Gratitude is a limitless source of energy when we feel overwhelmed by the struggles of our lives or the world. Gratitude can be a powerful resource to free ourselves from the trap of cynicism and despair. Ask yourself, ‘What’s right with this moment?’ There’s always an answer, no matter how dire the situation. The practice of gratitude immediately activates our present moment awareness. We wake up to the blessing of what has been there all along, though we may not have noticed it. It might be the presence of a friend, the smell of fallen leaves, or the familiar melody of a favorite song. Using the energy of gratitude, we can begin to bring appreciation to our lives and realize

that there is actually much to be grateful for in every moment no matter what.”

A mindfulness teacher, he wrote, “Somehow the gray November horizon and the crunch of leaves underfoot inspire me to be mindful of the countless gifts I’ve received in my life. I have enough to eat. My persistent flaws aren’t often embarrassingly visible. I have enough documentaries on my smart TV to fill two lifetimes. My tween children mostly like me,” in an article for Huffpost’s The Blog last November titled “Platitude of Gratitude: The Shadow Side of Being Thankful.”

Gratitude – as it is practiced by the great spiritual traditions – reveals connection.

“The art of being thankful connects us to those who have given us gifts while inspiring us to be gift-givers in the world. The truth is that our well-being and the well-being of others are connected. Everything and everyone is connected to everything and everyone else,” Nappi said.

Experiencing that connectedness

is one of the things that helped Eve Schreiber get through the worst times of her life.

“Life was a blur, hazy. I had a lot of different jobs because I couldn’t keep one. I was raised by a single working mother, so I felt I had to live up to her independence,” Schreiber said.

One morning, she showed up for work with a four-inch knife gash on her upper thigh, having no memory of it after drinking and blacking out the night before. A friend in recovery took her to rehab and she stayed.

“Attending [Narcotics Anonymous] meetings and participating in the fellowship gave me a sense of belonging. The camaraderie, the support and getting to know myself better through step work has given me a different set of eyes on myself. I got a better understanding of why I did the things I did when I used drugs,” she said.

Before that self-reflection, she didn’t much like life and saw nothing for which to be grateful.

“I was self-destructive. I was being reckless. I made a lot of mistakes, and

I ended serving time in jail for drinking. There you’re told when to eat and when to sleep, when you’re allowed to make a phone call” Schreiber said.


While in jail, she practiced gratitude. She was grateful for everything – from simple gestures of kindness, to the strength and friendship of other recovering addicts.

“When I got out, it was like a sense of privilege. I was waking up in the morning and not being told when to wake up. Driving is a privilege. Being able to use the phone and not take it for granted,” she said. “I’m grateful for a second chance. It’s like a do-over.”

Eighteen years have passed and she still counts every blessing. Although she’s recovering from surgery, is unable to work and therefore has no income, she is grateful.

“It could be worse. I could have died,” she said. “I’m grateful for sunrise and sunset, waking up in my own bed. I can walk on two legs. I can use two arms. I have the gifts of sight, smell, hearing. I have a sense of gratitude. My life really isn’t that bad.” **RHL**

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Holiday LIFE

Raising *grateful children* this season and all year long

by Alicia B. Smith
LIFE Staff

The holiday time rings in a number of lovely, fun and exciting

events and traditions, from decorating, baking and family visits, to religious observances and anticipation.

There is an underside to all of this good cheer, for along with all of the holiday hoopla, this time of year can put an emphasis on one's sense of entitlement, and the "I want" and "give me" yearnings can be overwhelm-

ing, especially for children who are looking forward to a visit from Santa Claus or to see what may arrive for Hanukkah.

Instilling a sense of gratitude in children is possible and should be a year-round endeavor.

One of the ways to counter this seemingly me-only attitude is action. Getting children involved in activities and events outside of their circle and daily life helps them to learn that not everyone is as fortunate as they may be and, by working to improve the lives of others, they can

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Holiday LIFE

learn to be grateful for what they have.

Students at Morley School in West Hartford participate in two annual events that help to foster a sense of community. In the fall, the entire school works to collect non-perishable food items for their Red Wagon Food Drive, a tradition that goes back more than 20 years. Just before Thanksgiving, students and staff wheel several red wagons full of items that have been collected and deliver them to the local food bank. In the spring, for the past 10 years, another parade of goods takes place, the Backpack Brigade. This time, students and staff collect new backpacks and school supplies, and once again deliver them to the town in order for them to be distributed to students in need over the summer months.

Since arriving as principal six years ago, Ryan Cleary has seen a third charitable effort begin. For the last year and a half the school has developed a relationship with a sister school in Haiti.

"That idea was born out of an effort to have an authentic cultural experience," Cleary said.

The focus, initially, was to collect art supplies for students in Haiti and has broadened to assist in other ways as well.

"The reason we do all of those things is we have kids and families here with a tremendous amount of talent and a tremendous amount of compassion for the people around them," Cleary said. "We want them,

when they leave Morley, to use their talents to be active and engaged in the community. The cool thing is students build a lot of perspective and that is where the gratitude comes in."

"As we drop off food at the pantry or look at a school in a third world country, the kids develop a real appreciation for the things they have in their own lives. They develop a really strong sense of gratitude for the personal things they have, for their family and, really, for our community," Cleary continued. "In helping each other, they are learning how much it means to be around others, share happy moments; they see the different situations other kids and families are in [and] it makes them celebrate together in a more meaningful way."

With the Haiti program, which includes kindergartners through second-graders, Cleary said he has seen students recognizing the differences between their school and the one with which they are partnering.

He has heard them comment on how many books they have in their classrooms compared to what they've seen at the other school when they Skype with students in Haiti.

"Kids are having real conversations about how isn't it great we have these things and we are so fortunate to be in this spot. Kids in Haiti have no art supplies, no walls, no books in the language they speak. That was a new shift in student thinking,"

Cleary said.

"It certainly raised awareness of the situation and at the same time it created a sense of gratitude for the things we have."

While these three programs were developed at the school, Cleary said they have inspired students to do other things on their own to help make the world better. Some students have organized a fundraiser to raise money for cancer, and even the student council developed events.

The work the students have done has spread outside of the school, too, and Cleary said, during the distribution events of food and backpacks, there might be 150 students delivering the items and about 100 parents helping.

"That's the power of community," he said. "It's fantastic to see families engaged in this work right alongside their kids. What great modeling it is for the children, to see parents involved."

For many families the season's focus is on their faith, which can be an enormous source of inspiration and help to put life in perspective.

The Rev. Linda Spiers at Trinity Episcopal Church in Collinsville said for many Christians, Advent, the time leading up to the arrival of Christ on Christmas, is a period of slowing things down.

"Our liturgy slows down a bit, it's a bit more contemplative," she said.

"It's totally opposite of what the secular world tells us to do. It's fast-

paced people are decorating their homes, it's frenetic. The season of Advent is meant to slow us down, to help us think about the real meaning of the season."

Throughout the season, the church has events planned to help children and adults do more thinking. Parishioners of all ages will be asked to write down on a slip of paper what the "deep yearnings of their heart would be," and place the paper in an empty manger, which will be brought forth in the offering during the service as a way to give thanks for all they have in their lives.

The church also will provide blank Christmas cards for children to draw on or write a note, which will be later sent out to those who are homebound.

The church also collects new socks to be distributed to Christ Church Cathedral in Hartford for its Church Street Eats program, which provides meals and clothing to the homeless.

"All of those things are giving children an opportunity and adults to really seriously think about the season of Advent versus what I want for Christmas," Spiers said. "They are thinking outside of themselves."

While the holiday season often inspires people to do good deeds, the needs are year-round, and Spiers encourages families to think of ways to help their children understand they can help at any time. **RHL**



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Holiday LIFE

Giving thanks across faith traditions

by Allie Rivera
LIFE Staff

With Thanksgiving rapidly approaching, many people take the time to pause and reflect on their gratitude. In various faith and cultural groups throughout Connecticut, the concept of gratitude is an important element of practice throughout the whole year.

"Amidah is one of the central prayers that we have in Judaism," explained Cantor Lauren Phillips of Congregation Beth Israel in West Hartford. "It's made up of a series of blessings. One of the blessings is the Modin prayer, this blessing of thanksgiving."

Phillips explained that the blessings said change depending on the day on which it is said, however the Modin remains constant.

"It's always included, no matter when we're saying this prayer," she said.

According to Phillips, the concept of gratitude remains important in the faith throughout the year in that it strengthens the relationship with God.

"We incorporate a constant gratitude," she said. "We offer things to God at all times of day."

Though gratitude remains the constant in the faith, Phillips said

that that thankfulness goes hand-in-hand with another concept.

"The prayer for peace comes right after the prayer for gratitude," she said. "It reminds us not to take things for granted and to be grateful for the blessing that we have in life."

In Judaism, the other central holiday for gratitude came about in early October with Sukkot, a week-long tradition that commemorates the harvest.

"We build temporary huts called Sukkahs, and we eat our meals in them. Some people even choose to sleep in them," Phillips said. "By building these temporary

structures and eating our meals in them, it reminds us that, when we emerge from the Sukkah, we remember how lucky we are to have these dwellings."

Tessa Beauregard, associate pastor at the First Church of Christ, Congregational, in Wethersfield, said the concept of gratitude is similarly important in her faith.

"Thanksgiving is an important virtue for Christians in our tradition," she said. "It's connecting the peace of God with our attitude of thanksgiving and gratitude."

According to Beauregard, practicing true gratitude for all that God

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Holiday LIFE

has provided is not only a challenge, but often a sacrifice.

"We call thanksgiving a sacrifice," she said. "To bring yourself to a place of gratitude is hard. You're aligning your heart with the heart of God."

Though that work may be difficult, Beauregard stressed that it is important in her faith to do so.

"God says in the psalms that that sacrifice is more pleasing to him than the Old Testament sacrifice of animals," she said.

"Whatever is happening in our lives, the attitude of gratitude is important to God."

In her own experience, Beauregard said she has found that not practicing gratitude also leads to unhappiness.

"I've noticed in myself when I go through times when I forget to be thankful and I put my focus on what's wrong, that breeds a kind of discontentment or disgruntlement," she said. "That thankfulness is a

really practical way of focusing on the many good things that we do have. It's kind of a mental health thing as well. It's part of our faith, but like all matters of faith, there's something practical that comes out of it."

That idea of mindful gratitude throughout daily life is a key element of Buddhism as well. Kathy Simpson, a community dharma leader in West Simsbury, explained that the faith focuses on an open-mindedness that

allows gratitude to flourish.

"With Buddhism there's kindness, doing a kindness for another and being grateful for a kindness that's been done," she said. "I just feel like everything is a potential gift. Every person that comes into your life, every situation you encounter, there's something to be learned from everything."

While Buddhism, like most other religions, has a wide variety of practices within the faith, Simpson

explained that the overall goal is to practice mindfulness at all times.

"It's an openhearted approach to everything one encounters in life," she said. "Being grateful for all of it is a side effect to the openheartedness."

Though the faith does not have specific prayers for those practicing to say, Simpson said that, through practice, life can become like a prayer.

"That openness and receptivity is part of everything that we do. In a way, I guess that's a prayer," she said. "You realize things in their essence the more mindful you are, so it becomes like a prayer."

Simpson, who has been practicing Buddhism for nearly two decades, said the faith's focus on being open to anything that comes along can only lead to gratitude.

"It's really a reverence for anything that comes our way," she said. "Anyone and anything has value that can teach. We become more appreciative as we go along." **RHL**

**"It's really a reverence
for anything that comes our way.
Anyone and anything has value
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Holiday LIFE

by Olivia Piper
LIFE Staff

Is being grateful good for you?

Showing gratitude. It may seem like a simple concept, and one that is often mentioned during the holiday season. Though we are often told that we should be grateful, how does it help us? Is being grateful good for you?

If you ask Dr. Diane Hayden, an experienced health and wellness professional and the owner and publisher of Natural Nutmeg Magazine, she will tell you exactly how being grateful is beneficial for both your physical and mental health.

"There is a special kind of magic in gratitude. It raises our consciousness,

boosts our energy and enhances our self-worth," Hayden said of the mental benefits of being more grateful in everyday life.

Additionally, there are actual physical benefits to gratefulness, as people who are grateful are more likely to take care of their health and, according to Dr. Hayden, experience the physical benefits of improved sleep quality and being better connected with one's body.

"Think of how you feel when you are grateful for something and when you say 'Thank you' for something. What are the actual physical feelings

you have in your body? If we can become more in tune to these feelings, we can stay in a more grateful and positive state, and it also helps you to notice when you aren't feeling well," Hayden said.

In addition to bolstering one's confidence or sleep schedule, being grateful every day is similar to any type of habit in that it will begin to impact different areas of one's life.

"Practicing gratitude is a fundamental component of the law of attraction and learning how to manifest and create your ideal life. The theory is that, in order to bring what you

want into your life, you have to be grateful for what you already have and you have to give thanks for what you receive in the future. This enables a constant flow of positive energy to go into and out of your life. If you are not thankful for what you receive, it will block the flow and you will have a difficult time attracting what you want," Hayden said.

As for how to practice gratitude, one does not have to wait for a gift-giving holiday or birthday, but can instead begin to notice and note the small moments in each day that bring joy and thankfulness. **RHL**

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The Goddard School opens

New preschool emphasizes both education and fun

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Parents have a new option for their young children with the opening of The Goddard School preschool system, operated by friends and franchisees Harpreet Bath and Seema Sabarad.

The school features what it calls a “dual-management system.” Franchise owners are on site at each location and work alongside an educational director whose focus is to communicate and work with teachers, as well as to implement the curriculum.

“It is a great experience to work with The Goddard School and mostly with Seema and Harpreet, who are

really amazing, a great inspiration,” Education Director Cristina Anes said.

“I was familiar with the Goddard School before I became the education director, mostly because it matches my thoughts of what a quality early childhood program should be by focusing on all aspects of children’s growth. I am very impressed with the high standards that The Goddard School holds.”

Anes, a native of Argentina, has lived in White Plains, N.Y., for the past 20 years, moving to East Haven this past spring. She has been working in education for more than three decades and has a master’s degree in



Courtesy photos

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Asleep in the Dental Chair

Rocky Hill dentist offers treatment for the dental phobic

For some people going to the dentist can be a terrifying experience. The drills, the smells and oh, that awful needle!

But now there’s a new way for the dentally challenged to get their needed treatment without having to go through all of the fear and anxiety. It’s called sedation dentistry.

“The way it works is simple,” says Rocky Hill patient, Mary Izzo. “One hour before my appointment I took a pill that Dr. Michalski prescribed to me. By the time I arrived at my appointment I was very relaxed.”

The patient is then escorted to the dental chair. They are in a state of sedation but are able to respond to their environment. Dr. Michalski explains, “The patient will feel absolutely no pain and in fact will usually have little memory of the experience.”

The patient’s vital signs are monitored constantly throughout the treatment. “When they awaken a friend drives them home and in an hour or so they are pretty much back to normal,” says Dr. Michalski. Mary adds, “Except that I have no bad memories, and experience no pain or anxiety. I just watched the TV above the chair ... time seemed to fly by during my treatment!”

Is sleep dentistry only for chickens? Dr. Michalski says no. “Some people, while they are not at all afraid of dental treatment are highly resistant to an anesthetic. They just can’t get numb. Other people simply don’t have the time to make repeated visits to the dentist and would rather have all their work done in one long visit. Sedation dentistry takes care of both issues.”

For more information on sedation dentistry, call (860) 563-4544 or visit www.michalskimd.com.



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education and special education.

"My main goals as education director are to create and maintain a safe learning environment for all children enrolled in our program, a sense of community that goes beyond school walls, and a strong team that transcends the relationship between faculty members and extends to families and also the town," Anes said.

Both Bath, a mother of two, and Sabarad, the mother of one, live in Farmington, although each spent a number of years living in Rocky Hill as well.

Prior to joining The Goddard School, Bath was a stay-at-home mom and school volunteer. Sabarad worked as an interpreter and liaison for a company that serviced the U.S. judicial system. The pair also own another business that hosts birthday parties for children.

Sabarad, who worked in engineering in her native India, remembers what it was like when her son was little.

"Whenever I tried putting my son in a child care center here, he got sick. I made the choice to stay home with him rather than put him in a center where he was not doing well. That stayed in the back of my mind," she said.

"When my son used to go to school, he was looked upon as an object to be dropped off and picked up later. I felt that emotional connect, what parents looked for, was completely missing."

She was first introduced to The Goddard School while living in Pennsylvania and was impressed.

"I really loved the quality of the school and the curriculum and how happy he was there," she said.

The Goddard School features a play-based



Friends Seema Sabarad, left, and Harpreet Bath opened The Goddard School in Rocky Hill.

approach called FLEX, which stands for "fun, learning experience." The company states that this approach "is grounded in research that children experience the deepest, most genuine learning when they are having fun."

"Our exclusive FLEX learning program focuses on learning through play. We offer yoga, sign language, Spanish and a fitness curriculum," Anes said.

Sabarad added the school allows for an active and individualized educational program.

"This is not a place where they are forced to sit around and learn things. Throughout the day the kids, through activities, are learning. Each and every child is different and the way kids learn is different," she said.

"We focus on each individual child and what's their style of learning. Some kids love reading, some kids love art, some kids love blocks, some kids love storytelling. So when teachers are developing their lesson plans, they know the kids in their classroom and what the kids are interested in."

For a lesson on counting, that teacher might develop two or three lesson plans and have different activity centers, offering the children a choice. Other lessons are designed around a group activity in which the entire class is involved.

"It's very important to learn how to be together and share and listen together," Sabarad said.

The school hopes to instill in children the skills needed for future educational success.

"What struck us about The Goddard School is that its program uses play as a conduit for developing a lifelong love of learning," Bath said.

"We believe in community welfare and know that The Goddard School in Rocky Hill will provide families with a quality early childhood education that will ultimately allow children to lead happy and healthy lives."

While the children are young, the school has

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an eye on the future, looking to develop a passion for STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics).

"For example, with science, we don't try to teach just inside the classroom," Sabarad said.

Children are taken outside where they explore trees and roots first hand.

"They are learning about trees not just by looking at a picture or a slide show. They are allowed to explore by themselves. We encourage them. They are always supported so they never feel overwhelmed," Sabarad said.

That emotional support is another major part of the official program.

"Nowadays, we notice more and more when kids go out to school, they are not emotionally ready. They are not ready to take on challenges. They are lacking the confidence they need. We work on the total development of the child so they are confident to take on any challenge," Sabarad said.

"I feel great about this school.

"Our exclusive FLEX learning program focuses on learning through play. We offer yoga, sign language, Spanish and a fitness curriculum."

– Cristina Anes

We're not just working on one aspect. We're working on the emotional aspect, the social aspect, we're working on their science, we're working on their math, we're working on their reading skills. It's in such a fun way they don't even realize they're working on this."

The school, which opened at the end of August, accepts children from 6 weeks to 6 years of age. There are about 50 students enrolled.

Prior to opening, Bath and Sabarad had to complete extensive training, both online and at the school's headquarters in King of Prussia, Penn. The school must adhere to corporate standards on everything from hand washing to diaper changes and is subject to unannounced inspections from a third party twice a year.

"Goddard is not your standard day care. It is a center for early childhood education that lays a strong foundation for the kids to become lifelong learners. We take pride in our exclusive FLEX learning program that focuses on learning through play," Bath said.

"We know the anxiety the parents have when they leave their precious ones with us and the trust they place on us to do the best for their children. It is our promise to them that the best interest of the children and families guides everything we do at our school."

Sabarad still acutely remembers how she felt leaving her child at a school where he wasn't happy.

"I really feel emotional about this because I had such a hard time with my son. I feel fortunate enough

to do this. We don't do this just for the sake of business. We feel we are doing something really nice for the kids. They're being taken care of [when parents] have to work," she said.

"They're secure, they're safe. Someone is looking after them, where they are being nurtured," she added, starting to cry. "I remember the days when my son used to go to school and the hard time he had. I always feel emotional about this because my son had a really hard time."

She wants parents to know that she understands what they are feeling and that staff are looking for clues that a child might need a little extra attention on any given day.

"Goddard is the home away from home. [It's] someplace where people care for the kids with their heart," she said. **RHL**

The Goddard School is located at 1155 Elm St. Ext. Call 860-969-0300, email rockyhillct@goddardschools.com, or visit goddardschool.com/hartford-new-haven/rocky-hill-elm-street-extension-ct.



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News roundup

Democrats win the council

Local Democrats won a second term in power in the Nov. 7 municipal election. Mayor Claudia Baio outpolled Republican challenger Lisa Marotta as well as former mayor Henry Vassel of the Unite Rocky Hill party.

Incumbent Democrats William O'Sullivan, John Emmanuel and Joseph Kochanek Jr. won new terms on the Town Council and will be joined by Mukesh Desai and Christopher Duff. Republicans Allan Greenspan, Edward Charamut and Jeffrey Levine also captured seats.

None of the five Unite Rocky Hill candidates for Town Council earned enough votes to capture a seat. Two of them were Republican incumbents who chose to run on Vassel's ticket. The Democrats may have the council, but Republicans enjoy the majority on the Board of Education. GOP candidates winning election are Jennifer Simboski Allison, Dilip Desai, Brian Dillon, Frank Morse and Kimberly Kehoe. Democrats winning seats on the school board are Laurie Boske, Judi Murphy, Maria Mennella and Rene "Skip" Rivard.

RHVAA supports food bank

Members of the Rocky Hill Volunteer Ambulance Association spent the weekend of Nov. 4-5 at Stop & Shop on Town Line Road. They invited shoppers to donate nonperishable food items and other products to the town food pantry.

The EMTs filled more than 120 boxes with food and other needed

items and collected more than \$2,200 in Stop & Shop gift cards and monetary donations.

Items always needed for the shelves of the food pantry include instant potatoes, juice boxes, snack foods, toothpaste and toothbrushes, laundry detergent, stuffing, rice, canned meats, salad dressing, cookies, toiletries, pudding, Jell-O, coffee, tea, hot chocolate, peanut butter, jelly, condiments, razors, deodorant and paper products.

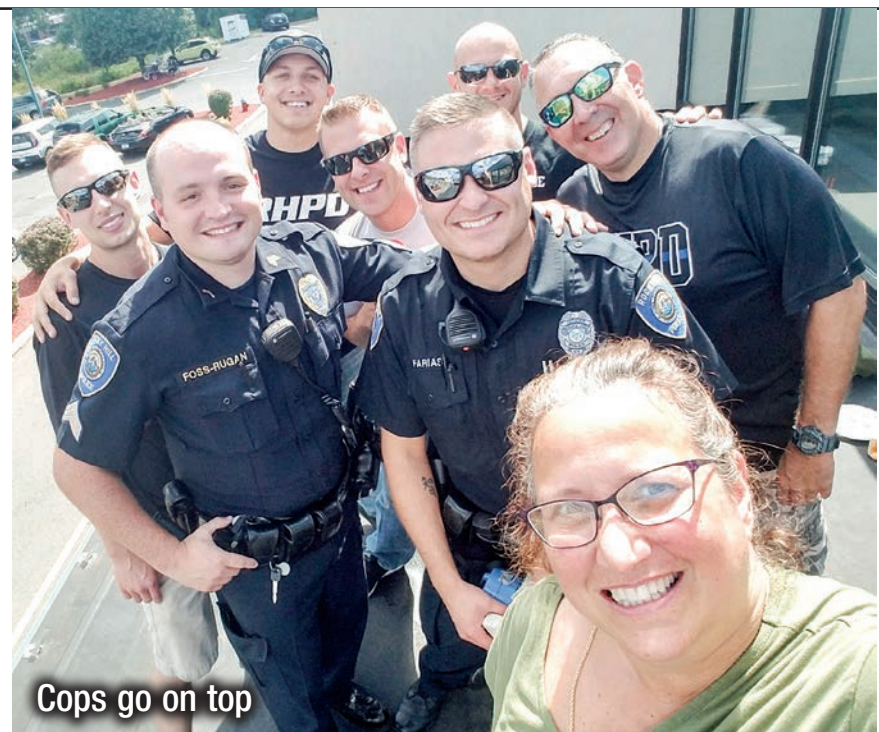
RHPD promotes three

The Rocky Hill Police Department recently promoted Joseph Phelps and Erik Gutsfeld to the rank of lieutenant and Joseph Smith to the rank of sergeant. Phelps and Smith are assigned to the Patrol Division and Gutsfeld is now the commander of the Investigations & Communications Division.

Phelps is a 17-year veteran of RHPD and was a canine handler for eight years. He was a member of its Marine Unit and CREST Dive Team and recently graduated from the University of Louisville's Southern Police Institute Command Officers Development Course.

Gutsfeld has been with the department for 18 years. He was a canine handler for 10 years, a DARE instructor, field training officer and department armorer. He holds a bachelor of science degree in criminal justice from Post University.

Joseph joined RHPD six years ago. He was a member of the Capitol Region SWAT team for two years, a



Cops go on top

field training officer, police cadet advisor, firearms and defensive tactics instructor.

Honoring Barbara Surwilo

The Surwilo family, through the efforts of Lisa Surwilo Dunnery, filed an application to request that the riverfront land adjacent to the foundry, 45 Meadow, be named after the late Barbara Surwilo.

She was a longtime resident, the town's first female mayor, and an advocate for several issues including open space preservation and senior citizens.

The Town Council unanimously adopted the recommendation of the ad hoc memorial naming committee to name the land the Dr. Barbara Orsini Surwilo Green Space. Family

members are shown celebrating the occasion with Mayor Claudia Baio.

Free programs at Adult Ed

Adult Education, GED preparation classes, independent study, online and classroom instruction are offered for Cromwell and Rocky Hill residents at Middletown Adult Education.

Free day and evening programs are offered at its 398 Main St. location. Enrollment is ongoing, call 860-343-6044.

Cops go on top

Mayor Claudia Baio joined members of the Rocky Hill Police Department for their annual Cop-on-Top promotion to raise funds for Connecticut



Honoring Barbara Surwilo



RHPD promotes three



Photo by Mark Jahne

**RHVAA
supports
food bank**

Special Olympics. They were on the roof of West Side Marketplace.

RHHS raises funds for hurricane relief

Rocky Hill High School recently raised money for Unidos Por Puerto Rico. World language teachers spearheaded the effort

by organizing a pajama day that brought in \$1,200.

Students and staff enthusiastically assisted in the effort to alleviate the humanitarian crisis that resulted following a devastating hurricane in Puerto Rico. **RHL**

Business note



Dr. Theodore Blaine is joining Orthopedic Associates of Hartford and will practice at the Rocky Hill Surgery Center. He joins OAH from Yale, where he is currently serving as the interim chairman of the Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation, as well as chief of shoulder and elbow surgery. He serves as team physician for Yale athletics. **RHL**

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It's not too late

Year-end moves can help save money on 2018 taxes

by **Mark Jahne**
Editor

There are only two months left in calendar year 2017, probably not enough time to do anything meaningful to reduce the tax burden that will be faced come April 15 of next year.

That might be the feeling, but it's not necessarily the truth. There's plenty an individual taxpayer can do, especially if he or she has a little extra money to dedicate to tax savings.

Hartford area certified public accountants offered a variety of suggestions for ways to reduce the tax burden. They all agreed that an individual's actions will vary depending upon personal income and other factors.

"There's always stuff you can do," Vinny Fanelli, tax manager with Fiondella, Milone & LaSaracina LLP in Glastonbury, said.

A maximum of \$5,500 a year can be contributed to an Individual Retirement Account. Those with Health Savings Accounts can add more money at the end of the year.

"That's tax free for federal taxes and Medicare taxes," Fanelli said.

People who hold a 401K retirement account can contribute as much as \$18,000 annually to that account. If they are expecting that their income may increase in 2018 he advised paying real estate property taxes by Dec. 31 and not waiting until January of a new tax year.

Self-employed people and others who pay quarterly state taxes can make the payment that is due on Jan. 15 before Dec. 31 to achieve savings. This can also have a secondary benefit in terms of itemized deductions.

"Charitable contributions is always a big one," Fanelli said.

Many people forget to report such legitimate deductions as charitable golf tournaments, clothing donated to charity, and the like. He encourages everyone to talk to a certified public accountant and a broker or financial planner, if they have one, for further advice.

"Maximize those things that can really save you money that are easy to do," Pamela Weaver of Avon said.

She is in business for herself and has many years of accounting experience. Weaver suggested making charitable donations if you are a taxpayer who itemizes deductions.

Make sure to get a receipt for any clothing or other items that are donated to charity, she added. It's also a good idea to take stock of any possible medical expenses that are deductible.

"People don't realize that they can take their long-term care premiums, or at least a portion of them," Weaver said.

Some legal fees are also tax deductible. Other things to consider are the costs of tax planning, tax preparation, uniforms and union dues. She advises paying real estate taxes twice a year and not paying once in a given year and three times in another.

Those who hold stock or other investments would be wise to speak with a financial advisor to get a sense of losses and gains.

"Now might be the time to harvest some of the losses" to offset gains that would increase taxes, she said.

"If you've had a major life event ... it changes your tax structure. Try to avoid surprises in April," Weaver said.

There are two primary components to tax planning, said Thomas Marien, a partner in the Wethersfield office of PKF O'Connor Davies, LLP. The first is to postpone or defer revenue and the second is to accel-

erate deductions.

"We look at it from that perspective," he said.

He suggests increasing contributions to retirement accounts and deferring bonuses to the following year if one is able to do so. Those who hold IRAs can have the trustees of those accounts make additional contributions on behalf of their clients to qualified charitable organizations.

"If you have a stock that's a loser you can take up to \$3,000 of that loss in the current year," he added.

Like other CPAs, he is waiting to see what comes out of the tax reform debate in Washington, D.C.

"We do expect to have lower tax rates, one way or another," Marien said.

"The hard part here is that there's a potential tax law change coming, but nobody knows if or when. There's a wait-and-see approach to that," Kenneth Kron said.

He is with the Glastonbury office of MahoneySabol.

Kron said some people may want to act to take advantage of what they expect will be a more favorable tax rate in 2018. This works best for those in upper-income levels.

"Deferring income has always been a favorable tax strategy" he said. "Make sure that you are maximizing your retirement contributions."

Like the others, he recommends making charitable donations for those who itemize as well as paying real estate property taxes prior to Dec. 31. That same time frame holds true for estimated tax payments to the state of Connecticut.

Kron also said it is wise to consult a professional to deal with any capital gains and/or losses. **RHL**

All of the people quoted in this story are members of the Connecticut Society of CPAs.

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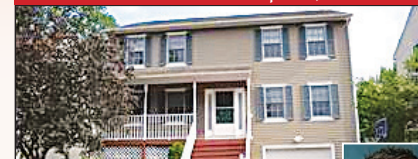


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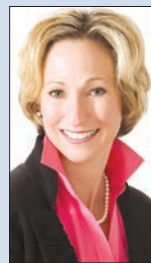
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Events *spotlight*

NOLA Benefit Concert

Nov. 17, 6:15 p.m.

Rocky Hill High School auditorium

rhhsroyalblues@gmail.org

Come out for a night of music while also benefiting the Rocky Hill High School Band and NOLA programs. The evening kicks off with tunes performed by the RHHS Jazz Band and then comes music by the Funky Dawgz Brass Band, a New Orleans-inspired party band. Tickets are \$15 for general admission, \$10 for students and senior citizens.

St Josephine Bakhita Holiday Fair

Nov. 18, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

St. James Parish Center, 767 Elm St.

860-529-8655 or stjamesrh.org

Get into the holiday spirit and enjoy Christmas shopping with the various crafters and vendors, pick up a gift from the silent auction or teacup auction, or make a purchase from the ornament tree. Returning features include the stroll down the cookie walk and the bake sale, as well as the marketplace and St. James Café for a bite to eat. Admission is free.

A Celebration of Moser School

Nov. 18, 1-4 p.m.

Community Center, 761 Old Main St.

860-563-6704 or inforhhistory@gmail.com

The Rocky Hill Historical Society hosts this afternoon of memories of Moser



School, which was in operation from 1949-2007. There will be a presentation on the Moser family and the school's history, a pictorial history of the school, musical entertainment and an opportunity to see the items that were stored in the recently opened time capsule.

Rocky Hill Athletic Hall of Fame Induction

Nov. 19, 2 p.m.

Wethersfield Country Club, 76 Country Club Road

hof06067@gmail.com

Seven individuals will be the newest inductees into the Rocky Hill Athletic Hall of Fame. They are: Chris Cozza, 2005, football; Josh Manoian, 2001, hockey; Lauren Stock, 2007, basketball; Eric Thorsell, 1999, baseball and basketball; Marco Tirillo, 2000, wrestling; Peter and Trish Egan, John J. McVicar Distinguished Service Award. Tickets are \$35 for adults and \$10 for children under 10. Proceeds will fund scholarships at Rocky Hill High School for deserving college-bound student-athletes.

Continued on page 40

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Events spotlight continued from page 39



Holiday Fair

Dec. 2, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Rocky Hill United Methodist Church, 623 Old Main St.

860-529-2442

Celebrate the holiday season at this fair featuring hand-crafted gift items and decorations, home-made baked goods, candy, Grandma's Attic and more. Santa Claus is scheduled to make an appearance at 11 a.m.

Festival of Lessons and Carols

Dec. 10, 4 p.m.

St. James Church, 767 Elm St.

860-529-8655

The St. Josephine Bakhita Music Ministry and Lectors are sponsoring this service of scripture and song that dates from the late 19th century. In this hour-long service people will listen to short scripture readings that recount the fall, the promise of a messiah, the incarnation, and the Great Commission to preach the good news. Each lesson is followed by a carol or other song that reflects on the lesson's message and a brief prayer. A free-will offering will be accepted at the door.

Blue Christmas Service

Dec. 21, 7 p.m.

Rocky Hill United Methodist Church, 623 Old Main St.

860-529-2442

This is a special night of reflection held to help people who are dealing with loneliness, sorrow, alienation and sadness. The service offers a way for people to claim those feelings and still feel surrounded by the compassionate love of God.

People notes



Ryan Fraleigh

Freshman **Ryan Fraleigh** of Rocky Hill netted his first two collegiate goals to lead five different goal scorers as Nichols College blanked Lasell College 6-0 in non-league men's soccer action at Nichols Soccer Stadium.

Claudia Baio, left, was elected president of the Trinity Club of Hartford Alumni Association. With her are outgoing president **Jeff Devereaux**, Trinity President **Joanne Berger-**



Trinity Club of Hartford Alumni Association.

Sweeney, Jamie McDonald of Bears Restaurant Group and **Austin Johns**, the incoming association secretary.

Jennifer Mouland earned a graduate degree in reading/language arts from Eastern Connecticut State University.

Fludjon Premto earned a master of business administration degree from

Western New England University.

Mary-Kathryn Rogers was named to the dean's list at Providence College.

Hannah Garrahy recently performed in "Thread City," a live performance that conveyed the stories of the immigrants who came to Willimantic to work in its historic

thread mills. She is a student at Eastern Connecticut State University.

Rachel Meisterling was named to the president's list at Goodwin College.

Heidi Burgess, Marissa Cichowski, Sharon Hansen, Rachel Meisterling and **Sandra Orosco** were named to the dean's list at Goodwin College. **RHL**

Slice of LIFE

photos by Lisa Brisson

This town was well represented when the Newington Volunteer Fire Department recently celebrated its 100th anniversary. Several firefighters from Rocky Hill participated in the parade that proceeded through the center of Newington.



Helping a neighbor celebrate

1. Engine 2 1/2 driven by Angelo Felice provided the crowds lining the street an opportunity to see a different kind of fire truck. **2.** The Royal Blues Marching Band from Rocky Hill High School plays while it marches down the street. **3.** Rocky Hill firefighters in dress uniforms wave to the crowd lining the street. **4.** Chris Brainard, at the wheel of Rocky Hill's old Engine 2, brought along a Dalmatian mascot. **5.** Truck 2 of the Rocky Hill Volunteer Fire Department drives along Main Street during the 100th Anniversary Parade organized by the Newington Volunteer Fire Department. The juried parade featured apparatus and fire companies from all over Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York.

December calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

1 Art Start, 10:30 a.m., for ages 2 and older, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhillct.gov/library

2 Holiday Fair, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Rocky Hill United Methodist Church, 623 Old Main St., 860-529-2442

Playgroup Plus, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23, 27 and 30

Wii U Gaming Club, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 30

4 Preschool Music & Play, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 11 and 18

SCORE Small Business Counseling, 12:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Google Computer Science Workshop: Art, 4 p.m., for grades 6-8, Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 11 and 18

Cr-afternoon, 4:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 11

Google Computer Science Workshop: Animation, 5 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 11 and 18

Music & Movement, 6:15 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 11 and 18

5 Fun for Ones, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 12 and 19

Knitting Group, 11 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 12 and 19

Books & Babies, 11:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 12 and 19

Google Computer Science Workshop: Social Media, 4 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 12 and 19

CT Hearing Voices Network support group, 7 p.m., Rocky Hill Congregational Church, 805-817 Old Main St., second floor classroom, 203-391-4968, also Dec. 12 and 19

6 Getting Started with Streaming TV, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Gingerbread House Making, 3:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Coloring for Adults, 6 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 13, 20 and 27

Winter Wonderland Celebration, 6 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Mystery Book Discussion, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

7 ESL Classes, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 28

La Leche League, 10 a.m. to noon, 23 Textbook Ave., 860-529-2307 or mgubala@sbcglobal.net

Minecraft Club, 4 p.m., for grades 2-5, Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 14, 21 and 28

Minecraft Club, 5:30 p.m., for grades 6-12, Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 14, 21 and 28

VR Headset Demonstrations, 5:45 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 14, 21 and 28

Family Make It, Take It, 6 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 14, 21 and 28

9 Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group, 10 a.m., registration required, The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or kpernerewski@benchmarkquality.com

British Afternoon Tea Presentation, 1 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library

10 Festival of Lessons and Carols, 4 p.m., St. James Church, 767 Elm St., 860-529-8655

12 Career Coaching, 10 a.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library

13 Buying a New Smartphone 101, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhillct.gov/library

Girl Power Hour, 4:00 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library

Evening Knitting Group, 6 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, also Dec. 27

14 SCORE Workshop, 10 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library

17 LEGO Free Play, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library

19 Health & Wellness with Dr. Klughers, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Libray

20 Buying a New Laptop Computer 101, 10 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library

21 Blue Christmas Service, 7 p.m., Rocky Hill United Methodist Church, 623 Old Main St., 860-529-2442

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

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Editorial

A few thoughts for the newly elected

Election Day has come and gone and the next group of elected officials will soon begin their work. Some of them are incumbents who have done this before; others are new to the process.

Whatever the case, we want to congratulate those who were victorious in their quest. You convinced the voters to place their trust in you by offering your ideas and insight for making this town a better place in which to live and work.

We also want to thank those whose efforts came up short. You should be praised for giving so much of your time and energy to our democratic process and for offering to serve your community.

Those now serving on the Town Council, Board of Education and in other government bodies would do well to remember why they were elected. Residents didn't vote for you because they want you to engage in partisan politics. They didn't vote for you because they want you to stubbornly hold to political ideology and constantly fight with the opposition.

They voted for you to run the government and the public schools on their behalf. They expect results, not stalemate. That's not too much to ask.

There will no doubt be times when you disagree, but don't give up. Talk to each other. Even better, listen to each other. Look for ways to achieve a result that offers the best benefit for the most people, even if it isn't exactly what you originally wanted.

Want an example of what not to do? Look at our elected leaders in Washington, D.C., who are so consumed by their partisan political games that they have become ineffective. All they do is dig in their heels and oppose everything and anything the other side proposes.

Politics is supposed to be the art of compromise, not ramming through one's own agenda and the heck with everyone else. It can best be achieved at the local level, among a small number of people who are neighbors as well as town officials.

Here's hoping that our newly elected leaders can set an example that those at the state and federal levels would be wise to emulate.

rocky hill LIFE

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]



First, Winter Storm Names...

Naming winter storms is unique to WFSB, dating back to the days of the Travelers Weather Service. It's a tradition that started in 1971, that our station is proud to carry on today!

Names are easy to remember, especially the ones that have

been attached to Connecticut's biggest winter storms. If you've lived in Connecticut long enough you'll remember Blizzard Larry (the Blizzard of '78); or, perhaps the big ice storm of December 1973 named Felix. In this decade, there was Storm Alfred in late October of 2011 when heavy, wet snow caused a record power

outage. And, it was Blizzard Charlotte that dumped up to 40" of snow on the state in 2013.

In order for a storm to get a name, it has to meet certain criteria: we must expect at least 6" of snow for much of the state, and/or ½" of ice accretion (a significant ice storm).

When it comes to the list

of names, past themes have included "former First Ladies" and notable sports figures with ties to Connecticut. For this season, we had our team of reporters (since they're the ones having to be live from the field, 'in' the storms) provide 2 names each for a letter of the alphabet and then let our viewers vote on Facebook. [RHL](#)

MARK ZINNI & ERIN CONNOLLY

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